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THE
E X C E L L E N C Y
O F T H E
S A C R E D W R I T I N G S :

ILLUSTRATED IN A
S E R M O N,

Preached and published to raise a Subscription to purchase Bibles, to distribute among the Navy and Army of Great Britain and Ireland.

ADDRESSED TO HIS MAJESTY:

BY C L E R I C U S. *W*

The Law of Moses, and the Gospel of Christ, are authoritative publications of the Religion of Nature—of God's Providence, as moral Governor of the World—and of his particular dispensations towards *sinful* Creatures. BUTLER.

How admirable the Religion, which, while it seems only to have in view the felicity of the other life, constitutes the happiness of this! MONTESQUIEU.

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DEDICATION

TO THE KING.

MOST GRACIOUS SOVEREIGN,

YOUR Majesty has been pleased to call the Attention of your people to the alarming state of the Nation; and, to that end, you have repeatedly appointed a day for the solemn and general deprecation of those judgments, which, it is apprehended, our Sins have brought upon us.* But, it is humbly

* See the Proclamation for a general Fast.

presumed,

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presumed, that we have no reason to hope a removal of the Effect, without a removal of the Cause; or, that divine Providence should interpose in our favour, without some public Attempts towards an universal Reformation.*

Will your Majesty then permit me to approach you with an Address, the design of which may be thought very intimately to concern the Dignity of your Crown---the Greatness of your Character---and the best Good of a considerable part of your loyal Subjects.

It is a Fact, too notorious to be denied, that the present Age is *an Age of Infidelity*: that, the Religion of the Bible, the spirit of primitive Christianity, and that divine system of Protestantism, upon which your Majesty's Throne and Government are founded, are lost in

* See Jeremiah xviii. 7—

DEDICATION. ▼

the exceeding depravity and corruption of the Times. There is little more than the Name and Profession remaining amongst us. So that the Enemies of *revealed Truth*, and the Foes of the *best Establishment* in the world, are rejoicing in the apparent dissolution of each.

In this melancholy, and by no means imaginary situation, exposed as we now are to the hostile Attacks of foreign Powers, distressed with internal factions, and so degenerate as a nation at large; a few of your Majesty's subjects have adopted a Plan, founded, they flatter themselves, upon true Patriotism, upon disinterested love to their Country and their King. A Plan, at present indeed in its infant state, in which they will naturally expect your royal patronage and sanction: because they are taught to look up to your Majesty

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jefty as a MINISTER OF GOD to them for good---as THE DEFENDER OF THE FAITH---and as the vifible HEAD OF THE CHURCH, in opposition to that bold and impious Ufurper, the Pope.

We are told, by a learned and pious Writer of our own times, that One, who formerly fwayed the Scepter of thefe Realms, was wont to fay——
“ God’s glory and the Church’s good, I think myfelf fo much the more bound in Confcience to attend, with the moft judicious zeal and care, by how much I efteem the Church above the ftate, the glory of Chrift above mine own, and the falvation of mens fouls, above the prefervation of their Bodies.”* ——
And, it is certain, to ufe the language of Baron Montesquieu, that the Principles of Chriftianity, deeply engraved on the heart, will be more powerful,

* See Dr. Horne’s christian King.

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in the government and welfare of a Community, than the false Honour of Monarchies, than the humane Virtues of Republics, or the servile Fear of despotic States.

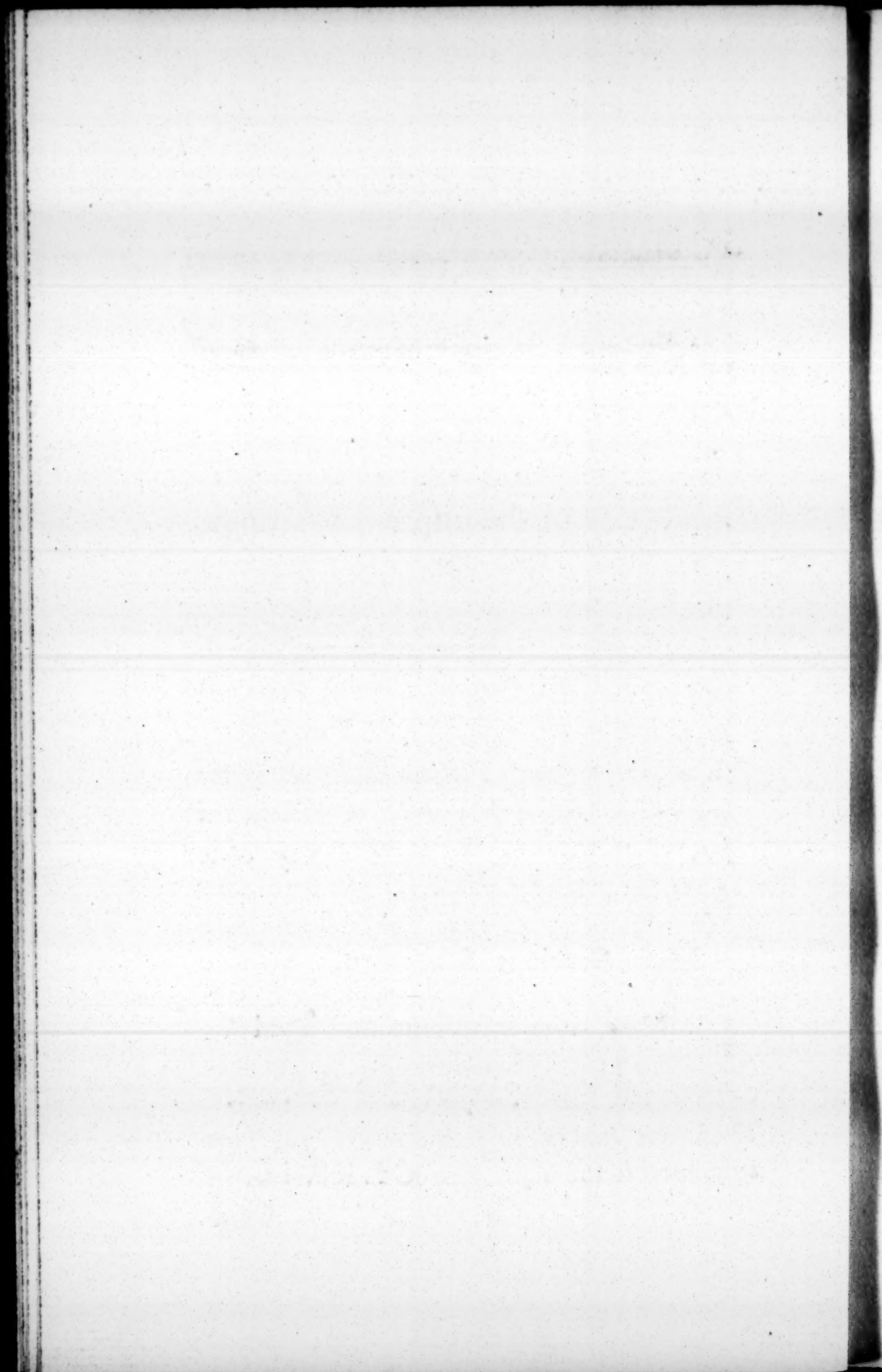
I am aware that I ought to make infinite Apologies for the freedom of this Address: nor indeed should I have ventured to lay it at your Majesty's feet, without permission, were it not for the importance and benevolence of the cause it pleads: a Cause, beyond expression, superior to that of Philosophy and Science; and your Majesty's Character is too well known, to render any other Apology needful from,

Most Gracious Sovereign,

Your very obedient and loyal

Subject and Servant,

CLERICUS.



T H E

Excellency of the inspired Writings,
&c. &c.

J O S H U A. i. 8.

This Book of the Law shall not depart out of thy Mouth, but thou shalt meditate therein Day and Night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein; for then thou shalt make thy Way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good Success.

THESE words were originally addressed to a person of eminent station and character; and the Speaker was God himself. They were spoken to Joshua, who was now appointed to the high office of Commander in

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Chief

Chief, under God, of the armies of Israel, whom the Lord had brought out of Egypt by the hand of his servant Moses. But Moses was dead : and after the death of Moses the Lord spake unto Joshua, saying, “ Arise, “ thou, and all the people, and go over Jordan unto the land which I do give them. “ There shall not any man be able to stand “ before thee all the days of thy life ; as I “ was with Moses, I will be with thee ; I will “ not fail thee nor forsake thee : for unto this “ people shalt thou divide the inheritance “ which I swore unto their fathers to give “ them.”

Joshua having obtained such an appointment, and being thus encouraged to proceed in the arduous undertaking to which he was called, received the solemn charge which I have recited to you in the text. And, in illustrating its important matter, I shall pursue the following plan—

I. I shall offer some general remarks upon this Book of the Law.

II. Shall

II. Shall consider what is meant by its not departing out of our mouth, &c.

III. Shew what kind of prosperity and good success is promised to them who meditate therein day and night, that they may observe to do according to all that is written therein.

This Book of the Law, if it have nothing else to distinguish it, is remarkable for its great *antiquity*: the learned have taken much pains, and have had more than their labour for their pains, in proving, that it is the oldest book in the world: we know of nothing antecedent to it, in point of time, or of excellency. That famous composition of falsehood and absurdity, called *the Koran of Mahomet*, is a quite modern forgery. The *Romans*, we know, received their all from the *Grecians*; and, though the *Grecians* affect uncommon antiquity, it seems agreed by all impartial Historians, that the *Egyptians* were before-hand with them; and that learning or letters were carried into *Greece* itself by *Cadmus* and his *company*, who are supposed to have been Canaanites that fled from *Joshua*, upon his taking possession of their land.

As to the *Phœnician* and *Egyptian* histories, said to have been compiled by Sanchoniathon and Manethon, and which have been made great use of by the Enemies of this Book of the Law, to say nothing of their defects, which have been sufficiently exposed by the most able enquirers into historical truth, *Porphyrius* himself hath acknowledged that the Jewish historian was senior to them : besides, that their fidelity and credibility have been rendered, and not without reason, very suspicious, from the uncertainty and confusion in their accounts of antient times : so that we may not scruple to affirm, upon the best authorities, which it were easy to produce, that this Book of the Law is the most antient book in the world. *

But it is more remarkable for its *divinity*, than for its *antiquity* : it is the only book, of which it can with truth be said, that it is *the writing of God*. † Not that I would be un-

* See Stillingfleet's *Origines sacrae*.

† Γεγραπται το Θεο.

derstood, when I say so, to confine my view to the writings of Moses alone, but to extend it to those of the Prophets and the Apostles; for “the Prophecy in old time came not by the will of man, but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost: and all Scripture is given by the inspiration of God:” and indeed the substance and matter of all the inspired Writings is to be found in those of Moses. The Pentateuch, and the Prophecies, and the Gospels contain one and the same divine Truth, administered in different periods of time, and under different modes of dispensation: but, like the three divine Persons, who have borne their distinct witness to them, they all agree in Nature and Design.

That the ceremonies under the Mosaic Oeconomy were really Hieroglyphics, or sacred types, figures, and shadows of good things to come, will not be disputed by any one who admits the truth and authority of the new Testament: the best idea of which, perhaps, is, that it is an exact commentary upon, and records the literal fulfillment of those

those good things which were *prefigured* and *foretold* by the Prophets, and in the Law.

I shall therefore no longer feel myself obliged to treat this subject as if it related alone to that Book of the Law, which was immediately delivered into the hand of Joshua, but to that which we emphatically call, THE BIBLE; and, omitting the recital of those moral proofs of its Divinity, Truth, and Inspiration, which are as decisive as the nature of such proofs will admit, I shall proceed to remark upon the great *Utility* of this blessed Book. Indeed, its necessity and its utility are both implied in its having been given by the Inspiration of God: for we may be sure that the infinitely wise God would never have provided such a Revelation, if it had not been needful; but it may be reckoned among the numberless Evidences of human depravity, that, after we have enjoyed so much benefit from this supernatural Light, we should be so base and ungrateful as to exalt the *ignis fatuus* of what we call our *Reason*, above it. We might, with equal propriety, affect to see without the assistance of the Sun, and abuse the famous
Galileo

Galileo, for ever having discovered the Telescope, because we have the faculty of seeing independent of either.

Not to stop here, however, in order to prove, from a variety of unanswerable Arguments, the indispensable Necessity of such a Revelation as we believe the sacred Writings contain, and which are to be found in many learned and pious Authors; it will be more profitable for us to shew its unspeakable Utility; which appears from its All-sufficiency, and from its including in it every kind and degree of knowledge, which are essential to our present and eternal Good: for which very reason, the knowledge it communicates, is emphatically stiled, Wisdom.

And where is the Man who does not wish to be wise? who does not desire to pluck of the Tree of Knowledge? "But where shall wisdom be found? and where is the place of understanding? Man knoweth not the price thereof; neither is it found in the land of the living. The depth saith, It is not in me; and the sea saith, It is not in ~~me~~ ~~with~~ me. It

It cannot be gotten for gold, neither shall silver be weighed for the price thereof. It cannot be valued with the gold of Ophir; with the precious onyx, or the sapphire. The gold and the crystal cannot equal it: and the exchange of it shall not be for jewels of fine gold. No mention shall be made of coral, or of pearls: for the price of wisdom is above rubies. The topaz of Ethiopia shall not equal it, neither shall it be valued with pure gold. Whence then cometh wisdom? and where is the place of understanding? God understandeth the way thereof, and he knoweth the place thereof. And unto man he said, Behold, the fear of the LORD, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding." This is God's idea of Wisdom. How different, alas! from those subtilties and corruptions of vain Philosophy and Science, falsely so called, which puff up the mind with a conceit of things, that have nothing in them.

True Wisdom then consists in the Fear of the Lord, which comprehends in it the whole of Religion; every branch of true Piety; by whatever name it be distinguished, whether it be

be denominated Repentance, Faith, or Holiness. Every one of which is essential to our Salvation : as it is written, “ Except ye
 “ repent, ye shall all likewise perish.” “ He,
 “ that believeth not, shall be damned.” And,
 “ Without Holiness no man shall see the
 “ Lord.” And, would we know what that Repentance is, which is never to be repented of—what that Faith is, which whosoever hath shall be saved—and what that Holiness is, without which there is no admission into Heaven : would we avoid every dangerous mistake upon these fundamental points, we must advert to the Scriptures, to the Law and to the Testimony ; and we must meditate therein day and night.

But concerning the Perfection, Utility, and Sufficiency of the Sacred Writings, I shall satisfy myself for the present, with producing a few very beautiful and decisive Testimonies, both divine and human. “ The Law of the Lord” says a good King and an inspired Writer “ is *perfect*, converting the Soul : the Testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple : the Statutes of the Lord are right,

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rejoicing

rejoicing the heart : the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever : the Judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold : sweeter also than honey, and the honey comb. Moreover by them is thy servant warned, and in keeping of them there is great reward.*

“ All Scripture,” says another inspired Penman of this sacred Volume, “ is given by Inspiration of God ; and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness ; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.”†

It is indeed our misery, to live in a day in which Prophets and Apostles are held in little esteem ; and in which more respect is paid to men, who have distinguished themselves by their philosophic researches, than to those whom God hath been pleased to distinguish in

* Psalm xix. 7—11.

† 2 Tim. iii. 16, 17.

a more eminent way. Let us then attend a little to their testimony concerning this Book of the Law.

And what said one of the greatest ornaments of human nature, and of this nation, upon this subject? “ Nothing could raise in me a higher esteem for *Luther*, than when he wished all his writings burnt; because the over-valuing of them made the people neglect the studying *the Bible*: the best Authors, like the stars, being eclipsed by the lustre of the sun, and *the Bible* being the Fountain from whence all other streams of devotion flow.”* What again another eminent Light in the philosophic world? “ Study the holy Scriptures: they have God for their Author; Salvation for their End; and Truth, without any mixture of error, for their matter.”† What again a third, no less, nor less justly admired by men of real Learning and Genius? “ I believe that the word of God, whereby

* The Honourable. Mr. Boyle.

† The great Mr. Locke.

his will is revealed, continued in Revelation and Tradition until *Moses*; and that the Scriptures were from *Moses's* time to the time of the *Apostles* and *Evangelists*; in whose age, after the coming of the Holy Ghost, the Book of the Scriptures was shut and closed, &c. &c.”*

To all these I might add the testimonies of thousands, whose evidence would, perhaps, be thought too partial and interested to have any weight : I have therefore designedly omitted them ; and have recited such only as may be supposed to have had no other bias to influence them, no other purpose to serve, but that noble, that becoming, that sublime cause, the cause of God, of religion, and of truth. These were men of minds too elevated and generous to affect the mean distinctions of *Infidelity* and *Scepticism* : they were *honest* enough to search the Scriptures ; and because they searched, they believed, they were assured,

* See *Ld. Chancellor Bacon's Confession of Faith*, vol. II. page 368.

that

that they came from God, and were able to make us wise unto Salvation, through faith, that is in Christ Jesus. Go, and do thou likewise : it is the advice of every man of *right Reason* and *sound Piety* : nay more, it is the advice of God Himself.

“ This Book of the Law, says he, shall not depart out of thy mouth ; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein.” We have already remark’d that this solemn charge was given to Joshua, at the very time that he was appointed to the Office of Commander and Leader of the Armies of Israel. Neither the dignity nor the troubles of his station were to be any plea for his neglecting the vast concerns of Religion : however great the trust that was lodged in his hands, whatever care and diligence it might require ; still this Book of the Law was not *to depart out of his Mouth*.

By which peculiar mode of expression, we may very safely understand that he was required to maintain, by every possible means,
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the spirit and purity of that holy Religion, which Moses, his Predecessor, had received immediately from the hands of God, and had brought from the mount; the Model of which was preserved in this Book of the Law; and a living Example of which Joshua was expected to be. His personal Discourse, his public Exhortations, his official Commands, were all to be regulated by this great standard, the divine Law.

To this end, he was to make himself intimately acquainted with it; to use the proper means to understand it; to carry it always about with him, whithersoever he went; notwithstanding all the confusion and perplexity to which he would be exposed in a state of war. For the God of the armies of Israel, to whom Joshua was as much, not to say more, accountable than the meanest soldier he commanded, had said unto him, "Thou shalt meditate therein *day and night*."

And why? Was he to meditate in this Book merely as a Critic and a Scholar? to find out the beauties and excellencies of its
Stile?

Stile? or to compile a system of Philosophy from it? No, but for that grand purpose, to which all the Scriptures tend, like so many rays to their Center, for the purpose of practical Religion; “That thou mayest *observe to do* according to all that is written therein:” not for contemplation only, or to fill his head with speculative notions, or that he might puzzle the priests, and sport with the most sacred things; but that he might religiously obey the divine Will, submit to the great Law-giver, and never forget that NO MAN’S DIGNITY OR DOMINION, HOW GREAT SOEVER, CAN SET HIM ABOVE THE LAW OF GOD.

But enough of Joshua. For we are told in the word of truth, that “whatsoever was written aforetime, was written for our learning.” There are some indeed whose situation and rank in life are very similar, in many respects, to that of Joshua; who are appointed to military departments, and to preside over national armies. And, though it is too much their profession, because they have no religion themselves, to despise it in others; whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear, THUS SAITH THE LORD, “This Book of the
Law

Law shall not depart out of thy mouth ; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein :” and, lest they should imagine that they are more than men, because they are raised above them, let them know that there is a God in Heaven above them—let them know that that God is no respecter of persons—let them know also, that though their Pride were as great as Nebuchadnezzar’s, or their Blasphemy equal to that of Balthazzar’s, there is a day coming, when the loftiness of man shall be brought down, and the haughtiness of man shall be laid low, and the Lord alone shall be exalted.*

God, I said, is no Respector of persons. As a proof of it, he has given the same charge to *Kings*, as he hath to their subjects ; the charge in our text. Consult a memorable passage to this effect ; wherein the Lord himself is pleased to describe *the Character* and *Duty* of such as are appointed to that exalted station, saying, “ It shall be that when a King sitteth upon the throne of his kingdom,

* Revelation vi. 15.—

he shall take this Book of the Law, and it shall be with him, and he shall read therein all the days of his Life : that he may learn to fear the Lord his God, to keep all the words of this Law, and to do them ; that *his heart be not lifted up above his brethren*, and that he turn not aside from the commandment to the right hand, or to the left." Deut. xvii.

With respect to those, who are more especially appointed to minister in holy things, the Servants of the most High God, who are not only to know themselves, but to teach others also, the way of Salvation ; they are under peculiar obligations to consider the solemn charge in the text : they are inexcusable, if they neglect or despise it ; and if, instead of displaying the glories and worth of sacred Writ, they are for ever exhibiting the comparative nonsense of a Socrates, a Plato, or a Seneca. What then ? did *they* come down from Heaven to seek and to save them that were lost ? Were *they* crucified for us ? Or were we baptized into *their* Name ? Why callest thou thyself a Minister of Christ, and buriest the Saviour in the rubbish and pa-

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rade of human Learning, vain Philosophy, or tinkling Eloquence? "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a Workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing *the Word of truth*. Preach the Word, be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort; meditate upon these things, give thyself wholly to them; *be in them*, as the original Greek has it, that thy profiting may appear unto all men*." Every christian Minister should be, in a certain sense, *Homo unius Libri*; and his determination, let him forfeit what he may, Preferment, Esteem, or Character, should be, in the face of Opposition, Ridicule and Contempt, to know nothing among his hearers, high or low, rich or poor, save JESUS CHRIST, AND HIM CRUCIFIED.

But are Kings and Officers in Church or State alone addressed in the Words of the text? by no means: they are addressed to all men, of all stations and orders, from the

* St. Paul to Timothy.

greatest to the least. Men, Brethren, and Fathers, thus saith the Lord to you, to me, to all, " This Book of the Law shall not depart out of thy mouth ; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein. And these words which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart : and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy Children ; and thou shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, when thou liest down, and when thou risest up : and thou shalt bind them as a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes." Deut. vi. 6.

So that it is not enough, you perceive, to read or hear this Book of the Law : it must be the continual subject of our serious Meditation : and Meditation is to the Soul, what digestion is to the Body : its contents must, therefore, be inwardly digested : for as animal food communicates nourishment to the body only as it is digested, so this spiritual food, which is called *the Word of life*, is

of no service to our immortal part, but as it is interwoven, if I may so say, in our very frame.

Nor are we to meditate, like the pious Mystic or the Platonic Philosopher, so as to rest in empty speculation : for all knowledge, that deserves the name, is in order to Practice : our universal Aim in studying this sacred Volume, must be, that we may do what it commands, without partiality and without hypocrisy; and in a peculiar manner, what it enjoins respecting our unfeigned submission to, our hearty acceptance of, the Lord Jesus in his mediatorial Character ; in his atoning Sacrifice, and in his justifying Righteousness : for Christ is the end of the Law for righteousness, or justification, unto every one that believeth : neither is there Salvation in any other ; for there is none other name given under Heaven amongst men, whereby we *must* be saved. Unto him, therefore, shall men come; and all that are incensed against him, let their pleas be what they may, whether they plead their Reason or their Goodness, shall be ashamed : and, as the wisest of
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the sons of fallen Adam hath told us, he that turneth away his ear from hearing the Law, in this respect, even his prayer shall be an abomination. Prov. xxviii. 9.

I must hasten, however, to take some notice of the last point of consideration in the passage before us. “ This Book of the Law, says the moral Governor of the world, shall not depart out of thy mouth ; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein ; for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.”

It seems to have been an invariable Maxim in the providential Government of God, that national, domestic, and personal religion, shall ever be attended with national, domestic, and personal felicity : that, in such proportion as a conscientious regard to the divine Law prevails in nations, families, or persons, there shall be an adequate proportion of peace and happiness. Whether this be true in general, I shall not presume to determine : it was certainly promised in the particular

particular instance upon which we are now speaking : and, if we could all agree to settle our ideas of prosperity and good success, by the Rule of God's word, by the balance of the Sanctuary ; it might, perhaps, be easy to prove that this is universally the case upon the whole.

What a deplorable state of distraction has the British Empire been in for several years ! And to what has it been owing ? to what will you ascribe it ? To some political Cause, it may be ; or, perhaps, to the secret intrigues of a set of men, who have been governed by no other, nor better principles, than those of Ambition, Disappointment, or Party-spirit. But, I ask, from whence do these corrupt principles originate, but from a neglect and contempt of this Book of the Law ? which, if it were regarded, as it ought to be, would make every Man, *an honest Man*, whether in the Cabinet, in the Senate, in the Army, in the Navy, or in the Church.* But now,

* What then are we bound to think of those, who are labouring to bring the sacred Writings into contempt ; but that they are as destitute of *every moral principle*, as they are of *the Religion of the Bible* ?

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run ye to and fro through almost every Department, I do not say with the Lanthorn of Diogenes, but with the Lamp of divine truth, and see if you can find the Men, who, like Joshua, pay any practical Attention to this Book of the Law. Alas ! is it not become the sport, the ridicule of the great men of the earth ? have they not altogether broken the yoke and burst the bonds ?* To urge its authority, or even to mention that divine Providence to which we are indebted for it, and for all our blessings, is now thought beneath the dignity of this enlightened Age, and only becoming the grimace of a Pulpiteer, the cant of a whining Enthusiast. Shall I not visit for these things, saith the Lord, shall not my soul be avenged on such a Nation as this ?

* *Ludere cum sacris*, is the definition of a modern Wit. *Voltaire* was a great Adept in this infamous science ; and every little Smatterer in philosophical Cant, is for ever retailing his blasphemy and nonsense. If the ingenious Reader desire to see this Author's *ignorance* and *impudence* in various parts of his writings properly exposed, let him consult a very masterly work, entitled, *Letters of certain Jews to Mr. de Voltaire*.

Waving

Waving, however, any farther discussion of this subject, as it relates to Kingdoms and Nations, the proposition is past dispute, as it respects individuals. Personal piety and personal felicity are undoubtedly inseparable : and it is a circumstance which ought never to be forgotten by Preachers or Hearers, but very earnestly insisted on, that Religion and Happiness always go together : that Wisdom's ways, are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths, are paths of peace : for it is under her direction alone that we are taught the true, the real enjoyment of the good things of this life ; and to her alone we are indebted for the knowledge of our *chief Good*, or the things which belong to our everlasting peace.

All the divine precepts, therefore, are to be considered and received by us, as so many commands to be happy : and we are not to suppose that they are mere arbitrary acts of the divine Legislator, to shew his power and authority over us ; but the most beneficent displays of his infinite Goodness, and kind regard for the welfare of his rational Creatures,

tures, whether temporal, spiritual, or eternal.

For, the more critically you examine into the Nature and Contents of this Book of the Law, which Joshua was enjoined to take with him as his sole Directory, the more you must be convinced of its transcendent Value and Excellency, as a Guide to Happiness; to true Prosperity and good Success. And, though it has not promised its disciples much of the perishing Riches, the delusive Honours, or the unsatisfying Pleasures of this World; it has promised to teach them a single lesson of more worth than all this World can give its Votaries, namely, *in whatsoever state they are, therewith to be content*: besides which, it hath assured them of a *Peace* that passeth all Understanding; of an *Hope* full of immortality; of a *Joy* that is unspeakable; of the *Honour* that cometh from God; of *Riches* that are unsearchable; and of *Pleasures* that endure for ever.

What though the sacred Writings then command us to do according to all that is

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written

written therein—what though they had enjoined us to take the most dangerous Voyage, in which we should be exposed to rocks, quicksands, tempests, and pirates——what though they had charged us to travel for years through the most barren deserts, where we should be likely to suffer from fatigue, from heat, from thirst, and other painful sensations; if such Peace, Joy, Riches, and Honour, were to be the end of all our Toil, who would not venture the Voyage, who would not proceed upon the Journey? who would not be forced to acknowledge that the way was prosperous, and that the Voyage was crowned with good success? How much more, when it is only required of us that, “This Book of the Law should not depart out of our mouth; but that we should meditate therein day and night, that we may observe to do according to all that is written therein?”

It would be a satisfaction to myself, were I not unwilling to exhaust your Attention and Patience, to enlarge upon this delightful theme: but I must advert now to the Occasion of our assembling

assembling at this time, and in this place. I am engaged in a Cause, which ought to have been pleaded by a more respectable Advocate; in which many thousands are deeply concerned. It is this. The State of the Nation is alarming; the state of Religion is much more so; and, in a particular manner, among those who are employed in the Navy and Army of this Kingdom: who, as they labour under many disadvantages in this respect, are withal so grievously neglected, as to have become at length impious and profane almost to a *Proverb*.

As a proof that we are not left totally destitute of national piety and virtue, and to awaken the Attention of higher Powers to so important an object, it is intended to raise a Subscription for the noble purpose of bestowing Bibles among those, who are employed in the naval and military service of Great Britain and Ireland: * and, it is hoped, that

* The number of those, who are employed in this service, is above three hundred and fifty thousand.

So benevolent an Undertaking will meet with your generous Encouragement, and with universal Success: but, since it may be thought necessary that I should enforce this design, and provoke your liberality, by the most cogent Arguments I can adopt, I shall beg leave to present the following to your candid consideration,

And to begin with the least: that, I mean, which arises from true *Patriotism*, or the love of our Country. No words indeed have been more abused and blasphemed, than those of Liberty and Patriotism. For, does the latter consist in a violent opposition to every measure, that is not adopted by ourselves, or by the party to which we are resolved to adhere; or the former, in that spirit of licentiousness, which regards neither Religion nor Laws? No. But true Patriotism discovers itself by an uniform, impartial, and zealous attachment to the public Good; and Liberty, by a freedom to promote and increase that good in every possible way we can; and, if you have a spice of zeal for such Patriotism and
 Liberty

Liberty as this, you will rejoice to exert it upon the present Occasion.

The love of one's Country is but an inferior part, or small branch of that god-like Virtue, to which many pretend, but to which most are entire strangers, called, *Benevolence*, or universal Good-will: a principle this which stimulates the mind to the exercise of every thing that tends to the peace, harmony, and felicity of human Nature: and which animates the soul with a generous desire, an active readiness to every thing that can diffuse happiness among mankind. And can I suppose that there is one before me, whose heart is devoid of this principle, which makes man, man? I am unwilling to entertain so shocking an idea, or to imagine that any of you have so little Benevolence, as not to encourage, as far as in you lies, that noble Work, to which your Attention is now excited.

But, shall I forget that I am pleading with persons who profess the Religion of the blessed Jesus? A Religion, let its ignorant, or
its

its malicious Enemies, revile it as they please, which breathes the very spirit of Benevolence and Humanity ; the divine Author of which himself came down from Heaven, upon the most unparalleled and astonishing errand of Love : who, when upon earth, went about doing good ; and now that he is ascended where he was before, is continually employed in the same manner ; ever living to make intercession for them who come unto God by him. A Religion, in short, whose very Essence and Genius, is Love itself. For, “ Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thine heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy strength,” is the first and great commandment of the Law ; and the second is like unto it, namely, “ Thou shalt love thy Neighbour as thyself.” Is it possible for us to be influenced by such a Religion, and not to be ready to distribute, and willing to communicate ; and that, “ not grudgingly or of necessity, for God loveth a cheerful giver ? While we have opportunity, therefore, let us do good unto all men, but especially unto them, who are of the household of Faith.”

To

To all these powerful Arguments, I might also urge that of *Gratitude*: we ought to be reminded of the obligations we are under to the Army and Navy of this Kingdom, who go through various scenes of hardship and distress, for the security of the religious and civil Liberties, which we enjoy: and, to which there must be an end, whenever any Papal power obtains dominion over us: and, that we are now at war with the two perfidious, popish, and arbitrary Powers of France and Spain, who, without the shadow of provocation, have commenced the most unjustifiable hostilities against us, is what we all know and feel. And, though *this Book of the Law* may be thought by some, a very pitiful acknowledgement of the debt of gratitude, we owe to them, who are employed, under divine Providence, to bring down the pride and insolence of these our dangerous foes; a good Bishop of old thought it a Present not unworthy the acceptance of a King.* And indeed,

* The pious Bishop Latimer, who presented a Bible to Henry the 8th. with a leaf turned down upon a passage,

indeed, if its intrinsic Value be demanded, we may boldly say, " That its price is far above rubies, and all the things thou canst desire, are not to be compared with it."

If it be apprehended that your beneficence, is liable to abuse : so is beneficence of every sort. It may not be improper, however, to observe that there was a short period in the history of England, when this Book of the Law, was made a part of *a Soldier's uniform* :* and it would be an act of more than martial magnanimity, if our Officers in Church and State were zealous to see that custom revived : especially, as our fleets and armies were never more renowned throughout Europe for victory and success, than at that particular crisis.

page, which expressly reproved the Sins to which that Monarch was particularly addicted. *O rare Latimer !*

A Wit's a feather ; and a Chief's a rod :

An *honest* man's the noblest work of God.

* To this circumstance, we owe that curious Pocket-Bible, printed by Field, and which is now so very scarce and valuable.

Not

Not that I am vain enough to imagine, that any thing I have said, will have much weight, where it ought to have most. The Age, it seems, is too enlightened to be befooled by Religion, or to pay any regard to, what our modern philosophers have materialized away, *the Souls* of mankind. Preferment in the Church, Promotion in the State, and the golden Image in both, is the great Idol whom all Asia and the World worship. We do not pretend to say, that former times were better than these ; but, let the times be better or worse, we cannot do wiser or more happily for ourselves, than by giving the most affectionate Attention to the Advice of that God, who says to all Persons, at all times, THIS BOOK OF THE LAW SHALL NOT DEPART OUT OF THY MOUTH ; BUT THOU SHALT MEDITATE THEREIN DAY AND NIGHT, THAT THOU MAYEST OBSERVE TO DO ACCORDING TO ALL THAT IS WRITTEN THEREIN.

F I N I S.



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